

# FAO Saudi Arabia Newsletter

October 2023 – Issue #12



World Food Day Celebration in Hail, Saudi Arabia.

## Welcome Note

Greetings! A busy month with the observance of the World Food Day (WFD) and many other UN-led and other international events. The WFD 2023 theme 'Water is Life' was celebrated with the Ministry of Environment, Water, and Agriculture (MEWA) at Hail with several dignitaries. Also, the International Day of Rural Women and the International Coffee Day exhibitions were organized with Reef and MEWA at AlAhsa and Jazan respectively. The Natural Resources Management (NRM) team actively participated in the MENA Climate Week in preparation of the COP28 next month. Our SRAD team is pleased that the weekly broadcast on agri-cooperatives is proving very popular with farmers across the country. Besides, six porta coolers for maintaining rose flower freshness were formally handed over to two agri-cooperatives in Taif. A tree planting initiative was undertaken in Thadiq National Park as part of the Greening Saudi Arabia Initiative. We hope you enjoy reading and find inspiration from the impactful work being done across various sectors.

## Grand World Food Day Celebration in Hail

The WFD 2023 celebration was held in Hail, Saudi Arabia under the auspices of His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Saad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. The WFD 2023 theme "Water is Life, Water is Food. Leaving No One Behind," highlighted the vital role of water in our lives and the future of the planet. The event, organized by MEWA, through collaborative efforts with FAO, cooperative communities, and related government departments and agencies aims towards achieving sustainable rural agricultural development. Notably, the agricultural extension convoy, which holds a Guinness World Record for covering over 8 000 km, symbolizes the dedication and progress in this field. A platform for knowledge-sharing, networking, and showcasing innovative agricultural practices. FAO experts conducted workshops in organic beekeeping, cooperatives management, efficient water management, and best practices in agriculture for knowledge-sharing, networking, and showcasing innovative agricultural practices.

## International Rural Women's Day in AlAhsa

Under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Saud bin Talal bin Badr, Governor of AlAhsa, the International Day of Rural

Women was celebrated and organized by Reef in collaboration with FAO. The event, attended by His Excellency Mansour Al-Mishaiti, Deputy Minister of Environment, Water, and Agriculture, provided a platform to discuss and share experiences on empowering rural women. FAO-SRAD delivered a talk and participated in a workshop with local women groups on the role of women in managing climate change and combating desertification.



International Rural Women's Day Celebration in Saudi Arabia.

## MENA Climate Week in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia hosted the MENA region's climate week, which showcased the country's commitment to environmental protection under climate change in preparation for the upcoming UNCCD CoP28 in the United Arab Emirates. Ayman Omer, Programme Director, joined Dr. Khaled Abdullah Al-Abdul Qadir, Chief Executive Officer, and Eng. Ahmad Alanazi, General Manager of the Afforestation Programme at National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) on the importance of sustainability, environmental preservation, for tackling climate change. They underscored the Kingdom's dedication, leadership, and cooperation with neighboring countries and the international community on environmental initiatives such as the Middle East Green Initiative.

## Coffee Workshop and International Coffee Day

SRAD coffee team actively participated in the International Coffee Day exhibition organized by MEWA in the Jazan Region, under the patronage of HRH Prince Mohammed bin Nasser bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Governor of the Jazan Region. Through demonstrations and training sessions, our coffee experts shared invaluable knowledge and techniques for coffee quality management with farmers and processors, aiming to enhance the quality of coffee and increase income opportunities. The workshop on the coffee value chain further emphasized the importance of collaboration and the exploration of improved coffee varieties that can withstand pests, diseases, and drought.

## Technical Support to Agricultural Cooperatives

SRAD cooperative team has been providing valuable technical guidance to the Livestock Care and Development Cooperative Association (LCDCA) in Hail, helping them implement the Micro-Franchise Business Model successfully. Additionally, a consultation meeting with the Khamis Mushayt Livestock Cooperative in the Aseer Region was held, focusing on realigning business models for cooperative administration and milk collection and processing. These efforts aim to enable smallholders to access resources, services, and markets while strengthening the agricultural cooperative sector in Saudi Arabia. In response to the need of establishing and emerging more cooperatives particularly women, FAO has actively raised awareness online on the Murshidek alerae application platform to encourage more cooperatives participations among smallholders, disseminate the information on benefits of agricultural cooperatives and its management.

## Distribution Portacoolers to help Rose Cooperative Societies



Distribution of portacoolers to Rose Cooperative Societies in Taif.

In response to the need to address post-harvest losses in rose oil extraction, the SRAD team proposed and designed portable coolers to help farmers and processors prevent losses in quality, decrease in shelf life, and evaporation of rose essential oils. These portable coolers maintain optimal temperature and humidity during transportation, resulting in a significant positive impact on the recovery, quality, and quantity of rose oil. As a result, the income of farmers and processors involved in rose oil production has increased. FAO SRAD team has distributed these porta coolers to the agricultural cooperative society and the rose cooperative society of Taif with support from officials of MEWA. These porta coolers have emerged as a promising solution to enhance the businesses of smallholders, reduce post-harvest losses, and ensure optimal results in rose oil extraction.

## Demonstration Farm Activities Improves Efficiency

SRAD rose component recently conducted a virtual meeting with farmers from the demonstration farms in Jizan. The purpose of the meeting was to gather feedback and observations about the planting sites during the past season and to make necessary preparations for the upcoming season. Embracing digital

platforms for such meetings allows the SRAD team to reach out and improve the efficiency of the project implementation activities and extend technical advisory services to a wider audience.

## Adopt Supplementary Irrigation and Good Practices at Sesame Farm

The SRAD rain-fed team demonstrated the benefits of using drip irrigation as supplemental irrigation to model farmers in the Damad governorate in the Jizan region. Through the establishment of a demonstration farm and continuous follow-ups, FAO has successfully encouraged a lead farmer to adopt supplementary irrigation and share his knowledge with other farmers through social media. This initiative will contribute to the wider adoption of new farming technologies in the community.

## Tree Planting at Thadiq National Park with Volunteers



Volunteers participate in the tree planting initiative at Thadiq National Park.

A tree planting event was organized by FAO and NCV in Thadiq National Park, where about 1 000 trees were planted through the participation of various groups, including a group of 106 scouts girls ranging from three to 17 years old with their parents, as well as volunteers from the United Nations team from various countries' backgrounds and embassies. All planting equipment was provided by the NCV, such as shovels, seedlings, and support teams. The event was held successfully with a big tent set up to provide comfortable lunch arrangements for the volunteers. FAO is grateful for the collaborative efforts that made this tree planting initiative possible.

## Strengthening MEWA's Capacity to implement its Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development (SRAD) Programme (UTF/SAU/051/SAU)

In the framework of the FAO Technical Cooperation Programme, this project is strengthening the Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MEWA) capacity to implement its Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development Programme (2019–2025). The project is being implemented with MEWA, Reef and National Center for Vegetation Cover Development and Combating Desertification (NCVC) in nine components across Saudi Arabia, i.e., coffee, beekeeping, roses, sub-tropical fruits, livestock, fisheries, rain-fed cereals, value addition and natural resources management covering forests, national parks, rangelands and controlling desertification. The main objectives of the project are to increase production and productivity while managing natural resources, promote diversification and income generation for smallholders, in particular rural youth, and women.

## Contact information:

FAO Technical Cooperation Programme in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Email: [Fao-sa@fao.org](mailto:Fao-sa@fao.org)  
Website: <https://www.fao.org/countryprofiles/index/en/?iso3=SAU>  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia



Some rights reserved. This work is available under a CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO licence